

## A CONVERSATION: JAY STUCKEY AT ANAT EBGI

It was hard looking at Stuckey's paintings in his Highland Park studio and come to terms with the visual noise and muzzled whispers in the work. The paintings are horrible in their rampant tramping of imagery and id, intriguing for the same reasons; washed out and fuzzy details similar to staring at static snow on a television. Word association gets me to the vinyl copy of Television's album *Marquee Moon* that hadn't left the record player since I arrived at Stuckey's LA apartment. Lyrics come to mind:

I spoke to a man down at the tracks

And I asked him how he don't go mad

He said "Look here junior, don't you be so happy

And for Heaven's sake, don't you be so sad"

Stuckey is the man down at the tracks and it is you/me who is asked to balance ourselves otherwise we will not make it through the abrupt narratives in front of us. The newest works offer a visual reference for the clouded mind. "Clouded" also points to Stuckey's use of white, used not to obfuscate but rather to steady us the way ones foot must hover over the brakes while driving through dense fog, attention heightened. In preparation for his solo show *PRIMA MATERIA* at Anat Ebgi in Culver City, Stuckey and I had a conversation. - *Arthur Peña, Dallas Contributor*



**Arthur Peña:** *What is the main source material for the work?*

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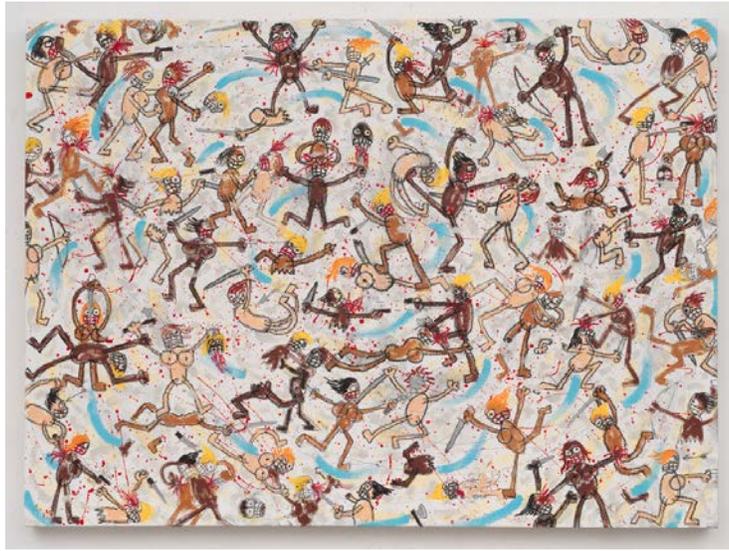
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Jay Stuckey | *Showtime*, 2013. Oil on canvas on panel, 33 x 45 inches

Jay Stuckey: Dreams and visions. But when people hear the word vision they think that you're driving down the road, the clouds part and a beam of light goes straight to your third eye but for me the vision is slightly more than an unexpected idea. To me it's coming from my unconscious mind, a moment where my conscience mind is relaxed or concentrating on something else that allows a thought through. That seems like the most direct way of accessing the unconscious mind and I do believe that everything that appears in dreams is archetypal. Even though you might see a specific person, what it boils down to is a common projection that we all share. I really feel that since I am working with dreams all of the imagery is of supreme importance, but at the same time I'm not exactly sure what it all means. So there's a knowing and not knowing that occurs which I am greatly intrigued by. A broader idea I've been working with for years now is this idea of opposites within an image. If you hold opposites close at hand there is tension and that tension creates energy and in a perfect world that energy creates life. That's where the life of a painting comes from. This conscious/unconscious mind dynamic working together.

**AP: Is there a grand narrative that you keep coming back to?**

JS: Indeed. There are continually reoccurring symbols but they take on slightly different manifestations and meanings within the narrative each time. An example is that there were years where I would always dream of this blonde woman. She has shifted from someone I know in real life to an actress or pinup. As time went on I realized that these were all projections of the same idea which is this feminine side of me that I'm trying to get in touch with.



Installation view, *Crying*, 2013. Oil on canvas on panel, 70 x 99 inches

**AP: Is this like Breton and the surrealist thought of the feminine?**

JS: It relates more to the Jung idea of the anima. You know for years I never worked with the figure. It really made me feel that, in a socio-

political context, I had to have an answer for the work before I even started painting. It was great to start working from dreams because in a certain sense I felt like I was doing what I was told. There was great freedom in that.

**AP:** *How are you thinking about your use of white in these works?*



*Jay Stuckey | Prima Materia, 2013. Oil and collage on canvas, 60 x 44 inches.*

JS: I've always felt a relationship to that no space/ white space of certain painters like Cy Twombly. There's something about the volume

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Jay Stuckey | No. 56, The Wanderer, 2013. Oil on canvas, 58 x 74 inches.

**AP: The white diffuses a lot of the lines and softens the blow of all the imagery. It slows everything down so much and the action becomes an even keel, all over composition. In older pieces, white is very much a background and now you're using it as a foreground. That shift greatly affects the read of the work. The white, in a visual and conceptual way, is internalization. That is, you are using it to fill in rather than fill up.**

JS: Early work was very much a quick read and with the new work I sit with them longer, they ask for more of your time but I'm not interested in completely suppressing the image. The tension would be lost if that occurred.



Jay Stuckey | Guardians of the Secret, 2013. Oil on canvas, 70 x 105 inches.

**AP: I see a lot of school buses and I think of a safe, secure sense of transportation.**

JS: Within each of the dreams it will have a different function but what I hope for people to take from these paintings is not so much my intention but their own projections. Hopefully I'm giving enough information so the audience can find their own narrative in the work. Braque had talked about how he wanted to imply something without being specific in his cubist pieces. Everyone's story adds to the work.

**AP: Where does Dubuffet rest with you?**

JS: I was immediately attracted to his pictorial style and I like the directness of Dubuffet. I think you have a family tree in art so I would think of him as a relative as well as Basquiat, Carroll Dunham, and a host of others.



Jay Stuckey | Charles Whitman, 2012. Oil and collage on canvas, 33 x 44 inches.

**AP: These works let you play the painterly abstraction role without getting too lost in the drawing that's happening. You still get to have those moments of textural messiness with line work. They really let you get to have what you want.**

JS: I just start piling it on. Since I go into these with no specific idea of where they will go, the vagueness allows me to just keep painting. But even if I do scrape or wipe something out I'm still in the painting, it hasn't gone away and most of the time that previous mark will resurface. I just listen to the work.

AP: Are there paintings that you look at and are reminded of a personal moment? Are there certain images that carry a more immediate importance in terms of when they find their way into a work?



Jay Stuckey | *Temenos*, 2013. Oil on canvas on panel, 24 x 33 inches.

JS: Yes. I was working on a painting immediately after my sister died and there were 4 days after where I dreamed of being in her house. So my sister's house comes in the work. Definitely the past can find its way into the work through my dreams and that stuff has to go in. It can be a real punch in the gut.

**AP: Does that kind of personal imagery have any importance over other images?**

JS: I've been wondering about this whole idea of the hierarchy. Scale of an image could give a sense of hierarchy or how an image can be drawn on top of other images making it seem closer to the surface and thus more important. I don't know that I let my own personal feelings towards the images dictate that. Sometimes those things happen because it's a formal decision.



Jay Stuckey | *Black Crow*, 2013. Oil and collage on canvas, 44 x 60 inches.

**AP: How are the works on paper coming along?**

JS: I came to painting through drawing; I've always felt comfortable as a drawer. I'm not necessarily drawing with paint but it's a lot of drawing. With the new work it is more about painting and not so much drawing. If I end up drawing more or working on paper it's because I've got all of these images in my head and I just don't want to forget them.



*Jay Stuckey | The Flying Dutchman, Oil and collage on canvas, 30 x 20 inches.*

**AP: Are you transcribing your dreams or drawing them from memory?  
There seems to be a couple of translations going on.**

JS: What you remember might not be everything that happened and might even be completely different what actually occurred. When you're awake and trying to recall these things, the other part of your brain is working and saying, "Oh, don't let that out." It's weird talking about this because it's still formulating in my head, but I couldn't help but think that there's this part of me that is letting the unconscious happen and saying, "Yeah brothas and sistas, this is my unconscious baby, fuck you. I'm you man. I'm just dreaming the same things you are and you just can't handle it." But I've started to think that the white is my conscious mind interjecting and saying, "I don't know...do we really need to let out all of this information? You don't have to rush into everything guns blaring."



Jay Stuckey | Cave, 2013. Oil and collage on canvas on panel. 44 x 60 inches.

**AP: Which world do you prefer, your dream world or this one?**

JS: It depends on the night! I had a dream a few years ago where I went to a dance party at this mansion with Warhol and Shania Twain. That was a good night. We got down! All three of us had MOVES.



Jay Stuckey | Charley, 2013. Oil on canvas, 49 x 65 inches.

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[Jay Stuckey](#), b. 1968 in Washington D.C. He received his BFA from Brown University and an MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. His work is included in the MoCA permanent collection and various private collections. Solo and group exhibitions include *The Company*, *Post*, *ACME* and *FoCA*, Los Angeles. The limited edition artist's book, *Glad Day*, was published in 2011 and included texts by Linda Norden, John Souza, Rosanna Albertini, and Judith Vida-Spence. Stuckey lives and works in Los Angeles. *PRIMA MATERIA* runs through November 9th at [Anat Ebgi](#).

[Arthur Peña](#) is a painter and contributing writer to *Arts & Culture TX*, *New American Paintings* and *ART HAPS*. He is the founder/director of experimental art space [WARE:WOLF:HAUS](#) and co-founder of *Deadbolt Studio*. He is currently participating in the 2013 Texas Biennial and is anticipating his first solo museum show at *Dallas Contemporary*, spring 2014. Peña received his MFA in Painting from *RISD* in 2012 and currently teaches at the *University of North Texas* and *Mountain View College*. He currently lives and works in Dallas, TX

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